

CORRIGAN'S CORNER: BUILDING SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

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As we enter the 21st Century the challenge cities face is how do we balance growth and maintain sustainable communities. A number of London City Councillors, myself included, attended the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) Sustainable Communities National Conference in Ottawa on February 7-9, 2002. FCM represents more than a thousand elected municipal governments. Holding the convention in Ottawa dramatized the importance of municipal and federal government cooperation to achieve the goals that are necessary to maintain our quality of life and create sustainable communities.

Federal Finance Minister Paul Martin, David Anderson federal Minister of the Environment and many other federal M.P.'s and civil servants attended the conference. Paul Martin in his last budget doubled the federal government's commitment of money for Green Municipal Funds to \$250 million. This fund administered by FCM is to help municipalities fund projects that are to reduce pollution, waste and carbon emissions. This Fund is designed to develop innovative technologies and to establish best practices for municipalities to emulate. All municipalities face the same challenges and frequently we can learn from each other's experience and as a result save money.

Many innovative ideas were showcased at the conference. Some municipalities are implementing projects to recycle rain water to reduce water consumption and discharge into sewers. Entrepreneurs were also promoting reduced flow toilets with two buttons for different flush volumes. Others were promoting front loading washing machines which reduce water usage by 30 percent and reduce drying costs significantly. While on an individual basis these savings may not seem significant but project the savings in water costs and energy, over a year the total adds up. Imagine the savings for an entire municipality.

Retrofitting large municipal buildings was also highlighted. One such product is called Solarwall. It is a perforated siding that can be used as an exterior wall covering. The sun heats up the air in the space between the cladding and the wall and a fan circulates the solar heated air with dramatic savings in heating costs. The cost recovery can be as fast as two years. Given the rising cost of energy the benefits are significant. A major Canadian car manufacturer after installing the product on one of its plants put it on all of their plants due to the significant cost savings. The product is virtually maintenance free and has the added benefits of helping Canada meet its Kyoto Protocol obligations by reducing green house gas emissions.

Other products being promoted included wind mills which are a pollution free renewable energy source. The Canadian Wind Energy Association hopes to install more than 10,000 megawatts of wind power capacity by 2010. These turbines will produce enough electricity to meet the needs of 4 million homes or about 5 per cent of Canada's energy needs. Wind energy is also immune to foreign price fluctuations. This green energy source will reduce electricity distribution costs, produce significant reduction in smog, acid rain-creating pollutants, heavy metals and particulate matter by replacing fossil-fuel combustion. The long term health benefits

and medical cost savings and a reduction of between 15 and 25 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions are additional financial and environmental benefits.

Our city will face many challenges in the future but if we work at building a sustainable community we will all benefit. If you have any thoughts on these or any other City matter please contact me at my office at 661-1558 or home at 652-0973.